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To: The Directors

Diocesan Resettlement Offices
U.S.A.

Subject: Community of VN Catholic Refugees

I, undersigned, Representative of more than 6,500 VN Catholics, priests, religious, nuns, seminarists and lay-people, who are living among 17,496 VN refugees at Camp Pendleton, California, respectfully request your attention to the following desires and suggestions of the VN catholic refugees relating to their resettlement in the US. These expectations and suggestions have been obtained after two months of my own careful study and close contact with my countrymen of all social classes.

So far, the US Catholic Conference has two ways of granting sponsorship to VN refugees. The first one is that refugees get sponsored by American individuals: It is good. The second one is that each refugee group is sponsored by one US Catholic parish: This is much better, but not publicly known throughout the country, therefore this plan is not carried out by many parishes. And, even in the case that these two ways of granting sponsorship succeeded, they would only meet the need of well educated people, as professors, doctors, lawyers, etc.

Unfortunately, the fact is that approximately 40% of the VN refugees do not belong to that category of intellectuals. They find it very difficult to adapt to the highly developed US society, because of (1) their meager education, (2) the difference of habits and customs, and (3) their natural doubt and fear of living in a foreign country. So, these poor refugees need a certain transition time for adaption where they must live together in a small community, in order (1) to be effectively introduced into the new life, thanks to VN and US instructors, and (2) to be trained for some professions, because many VN people are not specialized in any field. They need a pattern of living not too much strange for their status of living, customs and habits, and especially for the practice of their morality and religion as in VN.

To realize such an idea, we would suggest that, at the outskirts of some cities, where jobs can be found easily, one small community of about 5% of the population may be inserted within a big US community. You can call it a "VN hamlet" within a US district, but - may I insist - as an intergrant part of the US community, open to the US society.

To be concret, this hamlet could be organized on 10,000 square meters (equivalent to 2.5 acres). Let us imagine that 2,000 square meters are reserved for kindergarten and playground; the rest will be divided into housing units of 200 square meters; each unit will consist of one small house, one small yard and one small garden. The house, very modest indeed, with one story, will be used for two families of five people each. And so, 80 families including 400 people may be resettled in a 2.5 acre area.

In carrying out this suggestion, we may solve a lot of problems:

1. Small children (20%) may have their kindergarten and perhaps elementary schools close to their homes, with VN teachers.
2. Old people (15%) may see each other daily to keep from loneliness and boredom.
3. Housewives (25%) need not to worry about children while they go shopping or visiting their friends, they can also help each other in emergency cases; and they need not to hire servants.
4. Heads of families (20%), working far from home, may be sure that no harm may happen to their families.

So, everybody will feel they recover, firstly, the security for their material life, and secondly, the serenity in their souls-- that is mainly what we have looked and we are looking for, in evacuating from our fatherland, accepting to lose all our properties and to leave behind many of our relatives.

We believe that, while receiving material aid from the US people we-- as a VN Catholic community -- are able to give back part of our spiritual debt by living our specific way of life in moral and religious matters within this rather materialistic environment. Perhaps our presence may contribute to the re-thinking of our American neighbors about their faith -- a presence of more than 80 priests, hundreds of religious and nuns, hundreds of seminarists, and specially, more than 50,000 practising lay-people. This has been an expectation more than once formulated by French and German clergy, who newly asked a number of VN Catholic refugees to come and resettle in their dioceses.

We also believe that, economically speaking, this community will have a very sensitive advantage: Housewives, during their spare time, will come together to practise their traditional handicrafts as in VN: sewing, knitting, embroiding, flower making, manufacture of conical hats, rack splacing, lacquered work, nacre work.. So, they can pass their spare time usefully in contributing to their family budget as well as to the national economy. This can be done only in such a community.

I should emphasize here that this community will not be a closed community, but an integrant cellude of the American society, open to the US civilization and culture, participating in all activities of their American neighbors: public health, church, education and other civil services. But the main purpose if this community is to help those poorest VN refugees to progress naturally and happily towards a total integration in the American society, what will be certainly reached by their grown-up children.

To get this necessary sponsorship for those hard-socialized and unprepared to the style of American life, it will require land and money for building houses:

1. Land: may be given by local government.
2. Houses may be built up with:
 - a. Money contributed by individual sponsors, that otherwise will be given for renting houses;
 - b. Donations from good-will associations;
 - c. Money from US Welfare Department (approximately \$75 monthly per person);
 - d. Loans from managing companies, that will be paid per installement.

By the way, if among the refugees, VN workers as teachers, masons, carpenters, electricians, nurses and others should be hired for realizing this plan under American supervisors, part of the unemployment can be solved and the building and operation prices reduced. It is also necessary to caution some American workers not to worry about the concurrence in their looking for jobs, because during the first two years, the refugees' condition of "parolee" will limit the number of jobs available for them.

Finally, not only Catholic refugees, but more than 80% of non-Catholic people and heads of big families, regardless of their religion and education, wish to join such a proposed VN Catholic refugee community too. And sure, they are welcome.

For the financial reasons, we think that such a community can be founded on a diocesan basis. Therefore, may we beg you to have pity of the VN refugees, and to help those poorest people effectively and promptly, in the realization of our deepest hopes.

We are very obliged to you. God bless you.

Yours in Christ respectfully,

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R-Catholic Chaplain for Refugees

